

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DOHA 01457 160959Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY DOHA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3218

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY

USINT BAGHDAD PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MANAMA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT PRIORITY

S E C R E T DOHA 1457

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, MOPS, ET, UR, EG, US

SUBJECT: SOVIET AIRLIFT TO ETHIOPIA

REF: (A) STATE 293314; (B) STATE 297297; (C) MANAMA 2663

1. LATE AFTERNOON OF DECEMBER 15 I BRIEFED ISSA AL-KAWARI, MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND DIRECTOR OF THE AMIR'S OFFICE, AND DR. HASSAN KAMAL, ADVISOR TO THE GOVERNMENT OF QATAR, ON THE SOVIET MILITARY AIRLIFT TO ETHIOPIA, HIGHLIGHTING SOVIET ATTEMPTS TO KEEP AIRLIFT SECRET BY FALSELY CLAIMING THAT ADEN WAS THE DESTINATION OF THESE FLIGHTS.

ANY SOVIET CLAIMS THAT QATAR MIGHT HEAR THAT THE AIRLIFT IS INSIGNIFICANT AND THAT IT IS DESIGNED TO HELP ETHIOPIA DEFEND ITS TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY ARE IMILARLY FALSE.

I ALSO REFERRED TO BAHRAIN GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN OVER SOVIET
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FLIGHTS AMPRESSED TO AMBASSADOR CLUVERIUS (MANAMA 2663) TO ILLUSTRATE THAT AIRLIFT NOT ONLY HAD SERIOUS LONG TERM IMPLICATIONS FOR HORN OF AFRICA BUT POSED IMMEDIATE DANGERS TO COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT IN AIR SPACE OF INTEREST TO QATAR AND ITS NEIGHBORS.

2. BOTH AL-KAWARI AND KAMAL IMMEDIATELY GRASPED THE

IMPLICATIONS OF THE MILITARY AIRLIFT AND EXPRESSED SYMPATHY FOR USG CONCERNS. KAMAL SAID HE COULD READILY APPRECIATE THE BASIS FOR AMERICAN WORRY AND COULD ASSURE THE UNITED STATES THAT THE ARAB STATES, BEING BOTH WEAKER AND CLOSER TO THE PROBLEM, WERE EVEN MORE WORRIED THAN THE USG OVER THE PROSPECT OF COMMUNISM GAINING A STRONG FOOTHOLD IN THE ETHIOPIA/SOMALIA REGION.

THERE BEING NO SOVIET REPRESENTATION IN QATAR, NO OVERFLIGHT REQUESTS HAD BEEN RECEIVED BY QATAR AND NONE WAS LIKELY TO BE RECEIVED. SO WHAT QATAR MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO WAS LIMITED. BUT QATAR COULD HELP PUBLICIZE THE SOVIET AIRLIFT (LOCAL NEWS BROADCASTS SAME EVENING REFERRED TO AIRLIFT). AND WOULD CONFER WITH OTHER ARAB AND SOME AFRICAN STATES, ESPECIALLY SOMALIA, OVER WHAT COULD BEST BE DONE TO MAKE AS MUCH TROUBLE AS POSSIBLE FOR THE AIRLIFT.

3. COMMENT: SOMALIA BEING A NON-ARAB MEMBER OF THE ARAB LEAGUE QATAR, AND I BELIEVE MOST OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES AS WELL FEEL A SPECIAL BOND OF SYMPATHY FOR SOMALIA IN THE CURRENT STRUGGLE OVER THE OGADEN. CONSIDERATIONS OF BOTH MOSLEM SOLIDARITY AND IDEOLOGICAL HOSTILITY TO COMMUNISM/MARXISM ARE INVOLVED. SO EVERYTHING THE DEPARTMENT CAN DO TO HAVE THE SOMALIS THEMSELVES APPEAL TO THE ARAB STATES WILL OBVIOUSLY POWERFULLY REINFORCE OUR OWN APPROACHES.

HAS THOUGHT BEEN GIVEN TO HAVING AIRLIFT BROUGHT IN SOME
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APPROPRIATE FASHION BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS? OCCURS TO US THAT THIS MIGHT QUICKLY GENERATE WORLDWIDE PUBLICITY. END COMMENT.
KILLGORE

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